THE

RESTORING

OF

Fallen Beethzen:

Containing, the Substance of Two

SERMONS,

On *Gal.* VI. 1, 2.

Preached at the Performance of

PUBLICK PENANCE,

By certain

CRIMINALS,

On the *Lord's-day*, usually called

Mid-Lent Sunday; 1696.

In the Parish-Church of *Old-Swinford* in *Worcestershire.*

By *Simon Ford*, D. D. and Rector there.

With a Preface by the Right Reverend Father in God, *Edward* Lord Bishop of *Worcester.*

LONDON, Printed for *Henry Mortlock*, at the *Phœnix* in St. *Paul's*-Church-Yard. 1697.

PREFACE.

THE *following Sermons is of an extraordinary Nature; being Preached by the Reverend Author, at the Performance of a publick Penance, enjoyned to several Criminals of his Pariſh. If others of the Clergy would follow ſo good an Example, and do what in them lies to uphold the ſmall Remainders of ancient Diſcipline among us; it would bring more Honour to our Church, and the Religion Eſtabliſhed among us, than the warmeſt Diſputes for our Conſtitution, without regard to the Practiſe of it.*

I am not inſenſible, what ſcandalous Imputations our Eccleſiaſtical Courts lie under; but I deſire thoſe who are Concerned, to conſider, in how much better Reputation they might be, if the Management of them were more carefully look'd into, and brought to that Order which the Law of the Land Allows; and the ancient Canons, and common Rules of Juſtice and Equity require. And ſince thoſe Proſecutions are now taken off by Law, which made the loudeſt Noiſe and Clamour againſt them; I hope we may let the World ſee, that what Power is left in our Hands, is Employed

for the best Ends, viz. the Punishment of evil Doers; and the Encouragement of those that do well.

But I fear there are some who had rather have Faults continued, that they might still have occasion to complain, than use any Endeavours to Reform the Abuses Committed in them.

I know no Courts, but are liable to Abuses; but there is a difference to be made, between such as arise from the Rules and Orders of the Court, and such which come only from the personal Faults of those who are employ'd in them. As to the former, the Methods of Proceeding in these Courts, are of as great Antiquity, at least; as of any other Courts of greatest Esteem among us: The Ecclesiastical Laws have the same Advantage of Custom and long Observation, which any other Laws of the Land have; but as to the particular Proceedings of several Courts, the Rules are generally known, and certain, and agreeable to the Laws, and not left to any arbitrary Methods. But where the Faults lie only in the Persons; I hope that upon any just Complaints, effectual Care will be taken to Punish the Transgressors, and to prevent the like for the future.

But the General, and most sensible Complaint hath been, that Money, which Governs the World too much, hath so great an Influence on these Courts, that any Criminal Offenders may be excused from doing Penance, by a pecuniary Commutation.

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Whether there hath been any juſt Occaſion formerly given for any Complaint of that Nature, is out of my reach to enquire; but I hope there hath not of late been any Cauſe for it. Eſpecially, ſince by His Majeſties Injunctions *N.* 17. No Commutation of Penance is to be made, but by expreſs Order and Directions of the Biſhop himſelf; which ſhall be declared in open Court. *And I hope theſe* Injunctions *will not be like new Laws made for Repairs of High-ways; which often leave them as bad as they find them. If there have been ſcandalous Offenders, which through the Neglect of the Clergy, or the proper Officers have not been Preſented, let the blame lie, where it ought to do; the Eccleſiaſtical Courts have no Reaſon to be charged with other Mens Faults.*

But I muſt ſay it for the Honour of the worthy Author of theſe Sermons, that he took care to have the Court duly Informed of the Miſcarriages and Crimes Committed in his Pariſh: whereupon, the Offenders, who performed the Penance, ſubmitted to the Sentence of the Court for it. Which was accordingly done in the moſt publick manner; and he Preached a very ſeaſonable and uſeful Diſcourſe now Printed, relating to the Occaſion. And that it may anſwer the good Ends for which it was deſigned, is my hearty Deſire and Prayer.

Worceſter, *Apr.* 8. 97.

Ed. Wigorn.

GAL.

GALAT. VI. 1. 2.

Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault; ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs: conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be temptcd.

Bear ye one anothers burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt.

ALthough (dearly beloved,) I have of late been deeply affected with *Sorrow*, and ſecretly *Mourned*, (as the *Apoſtle* upon occaſion of the Inceſtuous *Corinthians* ſcandalous Sin, adviſeth that Church to do, 1 *Cor.* 5. 2.) for the late *Fornications*, and filthy *Uncleanneſſes*, that have been committed in this Neighbourhood, by ſo many Perſons as are now juſtly under Cenſure of the *Eccleſiaſtical Judicatory*: yet am I, at laſt, (on the other ſide) not a little *comforted*, that my good Adviſe to divers of the *Criminals*, who now appear before you, has had ſo good effect, as to render them willing, notwithſtanding all the *Diſcouragements*, which have, I doubt, been given them by either their obſtinate *Fellow-ſinners*, or factious *Diſſenters* from this *Church*, and it's *Diſcipline*,) to preſent themſelves here, as *Penitents*, to perform the *Penance* enjoyned them; and thereby, to give me occaſion, to inſtruct you all in thoſe Points relating

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to this Exercise of *Church-discipline*, concerning which, except upon such an occasion, you might not have heard from this *Pulpit*; and so, either through Ignorance, or prejudicated Opinion, have been led into unworthy Apprehensions concerning it.

And the *Text* I have chosen, I think, will afford me Grounds sufficient for the handling all the *Heads*, to which, on this Occasion I intend to speak.

You may therefore herein observe these three *Particulars*.

I. A *Supposition*, (that *Christian Brethren may be overtaken in such Faults as render them like Members out of joynt, in the Body of Christ, to which they belong: and so need* (*to prevent their farther Corruption, and danger of becoming Gangrened, and in the Issue, cut off*) *the charitable Endeavours of their Fellows to set them in Joynt again.*) For so the Word (καταρτίζετε) which we render (*restore,*) does import.

II. A *positive Duty* incumbent on the *rest* of the Christian *Brethren,* (upon such a *Supposal*, actually coming to pass, in any Christian Society:) to wit, (*to use all Christian Means they can, thus to restore such dislocated or disabled Members to their former Soundness.*)

In order to the better performance of which *Duty*, there are *two* Particulars observable, under this Head in the *Text.*

I. The *Description* of the *Persons* who are to act in this charitable Work, (*they that are Spiritual*;) which Phrase what it means, you shall be informed anon, when I come to that *Head.*

Secondly, The *Assignation* of the *manner* how this *charitable Duty* is to be performed (*in the Spirit of Meekness.*) and that heightned to such a degree of *Compassion*, as gives them a kind of *fellow-feeling* in the *pains* those *dislocated Members*

Members undergo, called (*v.* 2.) (*bearing one anothers brudens.*)

Thirdly, (and *laſtly*) *two* proper *Motives* to induce *them* to the Performance of this *Duty*, in the *manner* directed.

(I.) *One*, taken from a *conſiderate Senſibleneſs* of *common humane Frailty*: Hazarding the *ſound Members* to fall, and bruiſe themſelves at one time or other, upon like *Temtations* as occaſioned the Harms the *fallen Brethren* had receeived. And herein 'tis ſpecially remarkable, that the *Apoſtle* (by a kind of *Apoſtrophe*,) applies himſelf to each Particular of the *Spiritualty*, whom heexhorts to this Charity; wiſhing every of them to *conſider* his own Frailty, and Danger thereby, in the Words, (*leſt thou alſo be tempted.*)

(II.) The *other*, from the Obedience they owe to *Chriſt*, and his Law, in a ſpecial manner, requiring this at their Hands: So that by thus Meekly and Compaſſionately taking part of their Brethrens *Burdens*, *they* (*fulfil the law of Chriſt.*)

Of all, which I intend to diſcourſe in order.

I. Of the *Suppoſition*, which is here laid down as the Ground of the *Duty*; which contains in it this *Doctrinal Truth.*

That true members of the body of Chriſt, are liable to be overtaken in ſuch faults, as may ſorely bruiſe and cruſh them, and render them, for the time they lie under the guilt and pain of them, like diſlocated Members in the natural Body, and (do need to prevent their farther Corruption and danger of beingg angrened, and in the Iſſue cut off) to need the charitable Endeavours of their Fellows, to ſet them in joynt again.

For to be a *Saint*, whilſt here below in this Eſtate of *Imperfection*, does not diveſt any one totally of the *Frailties of Humanity*; nor does the *Seed of God* in us that renews our Nature, ſecure us from a Poſſibility of *ſinning* altogether; but only from *Sinning to Death*, i. e. Sinning at that rate that *hardned habitual Sinners* do, which the ſame *Apoſtle* calls ποιεῖν ἁμαρτίαν, which denotes a *profeſſed* pra-

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state of sin, which, by indisposition, bars the Door as to Recovery by *Repentance*, and so makes a Man incapable of *Pardon*, as appears by comparing 1 *John* 3. 8, 9. with 5. 16, 17, 18. But as to *Acts* of Sin committed through *Surreption* and *Surprise*, by the over-prevalency of a *violent Tentation*, not foreseen and provided against, he himself tells us, that whoever *denies such Sins to be in him*, or affirms that he is so Priviledged, as not to be capable of having so Sinned; he is *a liar, deceiving himself* with vain Notions of an *unattainable perfection*, and the *Truth is not in him*, Chap. 1. 8, 10. And indeed, if this kind of *Sinlessness* were attainable by any one here, the *Apostles Motive* in the *Text* (to induce the most *Spiritual* Men to *Meekness*, in *restoring* fallen *Brethren*, upon the consideration of their own *Frailty*,) would be to no purpose; as to such a Person, as pretends to it; who might hence justifie his greatest *Insolencies* against *Offenders*, as proceeding from *one* that by his *Priviledge* is exempt from that Consideration, on which the contrary *Duty* is pressed. He supposeth therefore here, that the holiest Man may be obnoxious to such *Falls*, as unforeseen *Stumbling-blocks*, laid in his way, may occasion: as the Word, (προλημφθῇ) and παραπτώματι) in the *Original*, properly import.

And the use the *Apostle* here makes of this Doctrine, (besides that which he urges from it, by way of *Motive* to the *Duty* of the *Text*, which in it's proper place will come to be considered;) is to exercise every one to *consider himself*, as thus liable to *Temptation*; and accordingly to be *watchful*, and *look about him*, (as Persons in a *Garrison*, beleaguered by an Enemy, are wont to do, about all their *Line*, to see where the *Fortifications* are weak, and in such places to set the *stronger Guard*; which is the true notion of the *word* (σκοπῶν) in the *Text*;) where he lies open to a *Temptation*, and fortifie the weak part against

gainſt *Satans Stratagems*, and *devices*, that he *get no advantage over him*, 2 Cor. 2. 11.

And upon this *ſuppoſition*, (the *firſt* thing obſervable in the Text) is built the *ſecond*, which we are now to enter upon.

II. The *Duty* incumbent upon the *Brethren*, (the reſt of the Church,) in the ſuppoſed Caſe, *when any of them is overtaken in a Fault*; to wit, *that they are to (reſtore ſuch an one*;) that is, (as I before told you,) to uſe, (on their parts,) all Chriſtian means that the *wounded Member* may be reduced to *ſoundneſs again*: and ſo capable of performing the *Duty* incumbent on him, and enjoying the *Benefits*, and comfortable *Priviledges* belonging to him, upon the account of his *Memberſhip* in that *holy Society*; and for which, his *preſent wounded Condition* diſables him. For indeed, foul falls do both ways *diſable* a *Church-member*, more, or leſs, according to the different Circumſtances he is under, *i. e.* as his *Crime* is either *ſecret*, or *publick*; *known* only to ſome *one*, or ſome *few*; or *notorious* to the *generality* of thoſe he converſeth with; and, as, (if it be notorious,) it is either before the *Eccleſiaſtical Judicatory*, or not: And *laſtly*, as, (if it be under their *Cognizance*,) it either is, or is not, advanced ſo far as to *Judgment*, and *Sentence*. And according to theſe, and other Circumſtances of the *Criminal*; ſo are the Endeavours to be made uſe of for his *Reſtitution* to be varied. And that both as to the *Perſons*, who are employed in that charitable Work, in their ſeveral Capacities and Stations; and the *manner* how they are to act in order to the Accompliſhing it. And *both* theſe, are to be found in the *Text* alſo, as I before told you.

1. The *Perſons* who are thus to endeavour the Offenders *Reſtitution*, are here called (πνευματικοὶ) which we render, (ye that are *ſpiritual*.) But it is ſtill a Queſtion; *whom the Apoſtle means by this Compellation?*

In *Answer* whereunto, I shall not confine my self to any of the particular Notions of *differing Interpreters*; but make use of them all, so far as they will admit of a Sense, as I apprehend most agreeable to the design of the *Apostle*.

1. First, then, I suppose, the Word (πνευματικοὶ,) here used, may in a general Notion, include *all the sound Members of the Church*, who are, in their several Stations to bear a part in this charitable Office. For the Church, being (in St. *Peter*'s Phrase, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5.) *a spiritual House, or Temple*. I know not, why every *stone*, or *rafter* of it, may not partake of the Notion of *Spirituality*; especially seeing the same *Apostle* does there call all Christians not only *lively stones*, but (in a sense) an *holy Priesthood*, to *offer up to God spiritual Sacrifices*.

And indeed, there is no *Member* of the Church, but when the Fault of any *Fellow-member* comes to his notice, he is obliged to contribute, as he lawfully may in his Station, his Endeavours to *restore him*: for no Man is *to suffer Sin upon his Brother*, if it lie in his way to *remove it*, Lev. 19. 17. For to do otherwise, is, (in Gods own Interpretation) *to hate him in his Heart*, whom he sees dangerously *wounded*, and yet, (as the *Priest* and *Levite*, in our *Saviours* Parable, *Luke* 10. 31, 32.) goes on *the other side of the way*, and lets him *lie*, and *perish* for want of help.

2.) There is yet a more *restrained notion* of the Word (πνευματικοὶ) which will also very well sute the design of the *Text*, and the State of the *Galatian Church*; and that is that which distinguisheth the *Members* of the Church, who are, in some respect, *more Spiritual* from others, who are (in comparison to them,) elsewhere called *Carnal*, and *Babes in Christ*, 1 Cor. 2. 15. and 3. 1. And so, (seeing all the *Members* of the Church are not alike in *Knowledge*, *Gifts*, *or Graces*;) they that excell in any of these, (or

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think they do, in the Phraſe of Ch. 14. 37.) are more eſpecially obliged to this *charitable Office*, as being, or ſuppoſed to be furniſhed with greater ſtore of *ſpiritual Medicaments*, than their *inferiour Brethren*. For the *Apoſtle* tells us, that all theſe *Gifts* wherein one Chriſtian excells another, are beſtowed, (not to capacitate them to *vaunt* and *magnifie* themſelves, and *contemn* others, who in thoſe reſpects are inferiour to them;) but they are all given to *profit withal*, 1 Cor. 12. 7. And that the employing of them in a way of *Charity*, is the *moſt excellent way*, wherein they may be made uſe of, v. 31. of the ſame *Chapter*. But alas! it is a thing to be much lamented, that ordinarily, (from the *Gnoſticks* downwards to theſe days,) Perſons, who moſt pretend to be extraordinarily *gifted*, (though indeed, they excel only in a few new *Phraſes*, volubility of *Language*, and impudent *Boldneſs*, &c.) inſtead of *charitable reſtoring* their *disjoynted Brethren*, moſt unchariſtably *reduce* them into erroneous Opinions, and rend the *Body of Chriſt* into divided *Factions*, and *ſeparated Societies*; gathered (too many of them) out of the moſt *Ignorant*, and *Vicious* of the *Church*, they *ſeparate* from; whoſe *ſpiritual wounds* they *heal ſlightly*, by perſwading them, that to become their *Proſelites*, will ſufficiently attone for all *former Crimes*.

3. But then, (*thirdly*,) becauſe whatever Applications *private Perſons* make in kindneſs to their *wounded Neighbours*, may poſſibly be inſufficient to effect a Cure, without the Aſſiſtance of a *skilful Chyrurgeon*; therefore, I muſt tell you, that the word *Spiritual*, here, does yet admit alſo of a moſt *reſtrained Senſe*; to wit, as it denotes thoſe, whoſe *Calling* and *Employment*, is converſant in *ſpiritual things*; that are the *Teachers*, *Guides*, *Paſtors*, and *Rulers* of the Church. Including all, from the *Apoſtles* downwards, who are inveſted with thoſe *Offices*, in order to the good of their Souls and Spirits of Men committed

mitted to their Charge. And to *these* only, do some very Learned and Reverend *Commentators* (though I think they are therein too *narrow*, as I intimated before) restrain the *Sense* of this *Word* in the *Text*.

And yet I concur so far with them; as to think these *principally* meant; *partly*, because, in the *apostolical Times*, the *Charismata*, or *special Gifts of the Spirit*, were most plentifully poured out upon them; and so many of them, as are necessary for the *Conduct of the Church*, in all Ages since, have accompanied that holy Calling, to that degree, as has been thought sufficient to denominate them the *Spiritualty*, in distinction from the *Temporalty*, in the esteem of all *Christians*: till the *Papacy* abusing the *Name*, render'd it less grateful to the ears of those, who shook off that *Yoke* in the *Reformation*: And *partly*, because this very πνῦμα πραΰτητ☞ in the *Text*, or *Spirit of Meekness*, so requisite to the *restoring dislocated Members*, is but once more used in the whole New Test. and there joyned with the ῥάβδ☞, or *Rod* of *Correction*, as attributed to the *Apostle*, in his managery of the *Corinthian* Church, 1 Cor. 4. 21. and *lastly*, because we find the word *Spiritual*, applied to those *extraordinary Persons* in the Church, which were called *Prophets*, and made use of, as equivalent, in common use, thereto; as in the *Old Testament*, in *Hos.* 9. 7. and 1 *Cor.* 14. 37. in the *New*.

And this *Duty*, all that are in any *Ecclesiastical Station*, are (according to the *Trust* Reposed in them,) to mind, in reference to all committed to your *Inspection*: and, are solemnly engaged thereunto, in this *Church of England* at their *Ordination*: they are to *preach the Word*; *to be instant in season, and out of season*; *to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering, and doctrine*. 1 Tim. 6. 2. and by the *Rubrick* before the *Communion*, are allowed to exercise some *Power of Discipline*, with due deference to the *Bishop*, in case of *scandalous Offenders*. And indeed, hereof we are sure,

ſure, that the chief Power of *Church-diſcipline*, as it was at firſt committed to the *Apoſtles*, and *Apoſtolical* Men; and by them derived by *Ordination* to the ſucceſſive *Paſtors*, and *Rulers* of the Churches Planted by them: ſo it hath always, till of late Years, been exerciſed by *Biſhops*: (the whole Current of *Antiquity* giving us abundant Proofs hereof, as to Matter of Fact,) who in *many Caſes*, acted therein *alone*: but in the moſt *weighty Matters*, were aſſiſted by, and acted with a *Presbytery*. But of a *Preſbytery* acting *without*, (and much leſs *againſt*) the *Biſhop*, eſpecially in inflicting *Church cenſures*: I think, (except in *Schiſmatical Churches*) the greateſt Aſſertors of *Preſbytery* can hardly give us one Inſtance. And to thoſe, who are thus intruſted with *Eccleſiaſtical Authority*, it belongs, *in the Name of Chriſt*, and with *his Power*, (in the *Apoſtles* Phraſe, 1 *Cor.* 5. 5.) to *determine* finally, the Caſes of *ſcandalous Offenders*, and by *Church-cenſures* to proceed againſt them, (either in order to *their Recovery*, in caſe they be *incurable*; or in order to the *Preſervation* of the *Church*, both in its Health and Reputation, in caſe they be apparently *irrecoverable*;) with more or leſs *Severity*.

And there is a *ſtronger Obligation* lies upon them, than upon all the *reſt* of the *Church*, to lay *themſelves* forth to the utmoſt extent of their Ability and Power, in the purſuance of ſo good a Work. To wit, the *Truſt* Repoſed in them, by *our Lord* and *Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; who (on the account thereof) are concerned to *watch for their Peoples Souls, as they that muſt give an account*. And they are *Paſtors*, (even ſuch as are of the higheſt denomination) only under him, the *chief Shepherd, and Biſhop of Souls*, 1 Pet. 2. 25. And therefore, to them it belongs, to uſe all means they can, to *ſeek* out, and reduce to the *Fold* all *ſtraying Sheep*, and to *heal the wounded* of that Flock, *over which the Holy Ghoſt has made them Overſeers*,

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ἐπισκοποι or *Biſhops*; that having diſcharged their *Duty herein*, *when the chief Shepherd ſhall appear*, *they may receive a Crown of Glory*. And if they be *negligent* therein, and the *Sheep periſh* through their *Default*; there is a ſad Doom pronounced in the *Prophet* Ezek. 34. 4, 5, 6. &c. very applicable to them.

Act. 20. 28. 1 Pet. 2. 4.

To which *Obligation* of *Truſt*, there is alſo, (in reference to their particular Charges) another of *Relation*. For the *Paſtors*, in ſuch a Caſe, are *Fathers* to their *People*, and they reciprocally, to them their *Children*, 2 Cor. 12. 14. *Gal.* 4. 19. 1 *John* 2. 2. 4. 4. &c. and therefore are they obliged to ſuch *Tenderneſs* towards them, as obligeth them to take care of them, when *ſick*, *or wounded*, as *Fathers* are wont to do towards their *natural Children*.

And thus have I ſhewn you, who thoſe *ſpiritual Ones* are, to whom it belongs to *reſtore fallen*, and *wounded Brethren*: and withal told you, that they are not all to perform it in the ſame *Methods*: but each ſort of them, as their *ſtation* in the *Myſtical Body* of *Chriſt* capacitates them thereunto.

And indeed, it is ſo in the *natural Body* alſo, according to which the *Apoſtle* modules the Regulation of the *ſpiritual Body*, in the chapter before quoted, 1 *Cor.* 12. 27. wherein he tells us, that in *both*, there are μέλη ἐκ μέρους, *Members* (as we read it) *in particular*, i. e. each aſſigned to its *particular Office*: and yet, in thoſe *diſtinguiſhed Stations*, and *Offices*, they *have*, or ought to *have the ſame Care one for another*, (v. 25.) i. e. alike, and joyntly, to aſſiſt for the good each of other. And as (to apply it to the preſent Caſe) if the leaſt *Toe*, in (the *loweſt* part) the *Foot*, be *wounded*, or *pained* in any kind, every other *Member* is concerned to aſſiſt the Cure: the *ſound Leg* offers it ſelf to ſupport the *wounded* one, *lifted up* by its concurrent Motions, and *laid* on it, that it may in the *eaſieſt poſture* be

be presented to the *Eye*, and *Hand*, to view in what State it is, and apply proper Remedies thereunto; and the very *Head*, *Shoulders*, *Neck*, *Back*, and *Bulk* of the *Body*, contract themselves into a narrower Compass to facilitate the *Cure*: so should it be in the *mystical Body of Christ*: every other *Member*, in its proper place, ought to do what belongs thereto; to assist the *Restitution* of the *Disabled* one to its *proper Soundness*, and thereby restore the whole *Body* to its due State of *Integrity*.

And accordingly, (1) those of the *Spiritualty*, in the *lowest* Notion (according to our former Partition,) even the *meanest Members* of this *Spiritual Body*, are, as (by *relation*, mutual *Dealing*, *Acquaintance*, and freedom of *Conversation*, they have Opportunities offered them,) to observe what is amiss in each other, and by seasonable *Admonitions*, and *Reproofs*, to endeavour the *Reformation* thereof, in a *private* Way; and when that will not do, to *acquaint* others, whom the *Offenders* are more likely to be influenced by, of their *Misdemeanours*; and, as they see these Endeavours disappointed by obstinate *Incorrigibleness*, and Crimes grow more *Scandalous* and *Infectious*; to shew their dislike of them, by lessening their *Intimacies*, and *Familiarities* of *Conversation* with them: and (last of all,) to apply themselves to the *Officers* of the particular Society of Christians to whom they belong, that they may, in their particular Places, and Subordinations, use their Power to *Reclaim*, and *Reform* them.

(2.) And those *Spiritual Ones* (in the *second Notion* before-mentioned,) who are, or are esteemed to be, beyond the Community of Christians, in *Parts*, and *Gifts*, or by *Education*, *Quality*, or *Degree*, capable of doing more Good by their Influence than others; are to take all occasional Advantages, which Providence offers them, (especially among their *Equals*, and those who have any more then ordinary *Deference* for them, or *Dependance* upon them,)

to ſhame, and put out of *Countenance*, bold and daring *Impiety*, or *Immorality*: and eſpecially, if, (to all other Advantages before-mentioned,) they have any part of legal *Authority Annexed*, to employ that, as far as it will extend to thoſe holy Ends; and withal, rendring their Endeavours in that Kind, more Efficacious, by their own *exemplary Piety* and *Vertue*, and *laſtly*, by Countenancing, and Encouraging thoſe in *Eccleſiaſtical Authority*, to the utmoſt of their Power, to the doing of their Duty, that by their joynt Concurrence, the *greateſt Offenders* may, (as well as the *meaneſt*) be brought under thoſe due *Methods* of *Cure*, in reference to their ſpiritual Diſtempers.

(3) And *laſtly*, thoſe who by *Office* in the Church, are (as I before told you) moſt peculiarly Entituled to the Denomination of *ſpiritual Perſons* in the *Text*, are, (when all other Means have been uſed, and prove *ineffectual*,) to put the laſt Hand, to this Holy and Charitable Work, in their *Church-judicatories*: to *call Criminals* before them, when they come to their Notice by regular *Information*, and *Preſentment*; or otherwiſe, to *examine* their *Facts* with their particular aggravating, or leſſening Circumſtances: and upon full Examination, Authoritatively to Admoniſh and Exhort, and Reprove them, and finally to paſs *Judgment*, and by the *Cenſures* of the *Church*, to *Proſecute* them, either to *their Amendment*, by enjoyning them ſuch *penitential* Acknowledgments of their *Crimes*, as may teſtifie their *Repentance* for them, ſatsifie the Church for the *Scandal* given by them, and (by the *Sorrow* and *Shame* which they have occaſioned them to undergo,) both *preſerve themſelves* from *relapſing* into the ſame, or like Sins, and *others* by their Examples, from ſuch *Courſes*: and if they ſhall obſtinately refuſe ſuch a Salutiferus *Penance*, to proceed to the *greater*, or leſſer *Excommunication*, as the Degrees of their Obſtinacy deſerve. And *laſtly*, upon their returning to a better Mind, (in caſe thoſe

Methods

Methods, through God's Grace, reduce them,) to grant them *Abſolution* in the Name of *Chriſt*, and his *Church*, and thereby, to *looſen* thoſe they have *bound*, to *forgive them*, *reſtore* them to the *Communion* of the Church, and *confirm their Love* to them, in the Senſe of thoſe *Scripture Expreſſions*, uſed to that purpoſe, *Matth.* 16, 19. 18, 18. *John* 20, 23. 2 *Cor.* 2. 7, 8. &c.

And thus having ſhewed you all, how far you are concerned, in, and by what *Means*, and *Methods*, you, and all others are to perform your and their Parts, in reference to ſo *Chriſtian a Duty*; I think, the moſt proper *uſe* of all this Diſcourſe that we can make, is,

1. To *reflect* with holy *Grief*, upon the great *Defects* in point of *Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline*; ordained by our *Saviour*, for ſo Great and Holy an End, which at this Day, all *Chriſtian Churches* lie under, and the great *Danger* of ſo many Souls in them, for want of *ſufficient Remedies* againſt the *Diſtempers* and *Diſeaſes* they are *expoſed* to, and too often *over-run* withal. There being hardly any Church in the World, that ſince the *Ceſſation* of *Miracles*, (which kept the World in Awe by the Atteſtation they gave of the *divine Authority*, backing the *Cenſures* of the *Church*, with *dreadful Executions* of *obſtinate Offenders*) ever attained to that *intrinſick* Power, as to be able to ſtand on its *own Legs*; but has been fain to call in the *Civil Magiſtracy* to its Aſſiſtance: (and in moſt places) has too unhappily purchaſed its Aſſiſtance, with the conſiderable leſſening of its Orthodoxy, Unity, or Revenues; and Diminution of its *original Authority*, to accommodate the *Intereſts* of particular *States* and *Kingdoms*.

2. Earneſtly to *deſire* (as *our Church* Profeſſeth to do) *that the godly Diſcipline of the* Primitive *Church*, *of putting all who are Convicted of notorious* Sin, *to open* Penance, *were in its original* Perfection *reſtored again*, in order to the great Ends there mentioned; *that the* Criminals *being*

Punished in this World, their Souls may be saved in the Day of the Lord; and that others Admonished by their Example, may be the more afraid to offend. And such *Desires*, expressed in our *earnest Prayers* to God, it may be hoped, may induce him, in time, to make *all the Kingdoms of the Earth* (*in this respect*) *the Kingdoms of the Lord, and his Christ*, according to that *prophetical Promise*, Apoc. 11. 15. the *means* of fulfilling whereof, and the *Times and Seasons* wherein it is to be Accomplished, have filled the Christian World with so many *Disputes*, from the Times of the first *Chiliasts*, down to our Dayes; and so many irregular *Attempts* of *Indiscreet*, and sometimes *furious Zeal* to Accomplish it. and we have another comfortable *Promise*, applicable to that purpose; that, when the *Lords Time shall come to build up his* Zion, *he will appear in his Glory, and not despise, but regard the Prayer of his destitute Church*, &c. *Ps.* 102. 16, 17.

3. And to the utmost of our Power, to *preserve*, and keep in *exercise* so much of it, in the mean time, as *yet remains* to us, in this *general Decay*; which though (through the *Indulgence* of our *Laws*, it reach not all Offendors; yet) is sufficiently assisted by them, to *redress*, if well followed, most *notorious Immoralities*; or at least, to render them so *uneasie* to those that are *guilty* of them; that 'tis much *our Fault*, that they dare appear so *Open-faced* in the sight of the Sun, as they daily do. So that, (in this Case, at least,) it must needs be highly unreasonable, for the quarelsome *Dissenters* from our *Church*, to impute the abounding of such *Crimes* to the *Church-constitution*; and from thence to frame *colourable Excuses* for their *Separations* from it; when *they themselves*, would they joyn with us effectually, for the Prosecution of them, might soon remove that *Scandal* out of the way; which I am afraid, (whatever they pretend) too many of them are secretly willing should continue there, for the carrying on of those *By-ends* of

of their own, to which they find the *Prejudices* thence raiſed ſo Serviceable.

But (to ſhut up this Head) if we cannot herein get their *hearty Aſſiſtances*, who ſtand *divided* from us; let thoſe of us, at leaſt, who profeſs to own *parochial Communion*, (and eſpecially the *Officers* of theſe *Churches* legally Conſtituted,) rather chooſe (with *Moſes*) to *ſtand alone in the Gap*, then endanger the breaking in of God's Wrath upon us, for ſuffering our *Laws*, ſo far as they will extend, to ſleep, in ſo general an *Inundation* of *licentious Debauchery*: Let us, (after private *Admonitions* and *Reproofs*, tryed in vain, by *warning the Unruly*,) make *faithful Preſentments* of *Incorrigible Offenders* to the *Eccleſiaſtical Judicatories*; that they may either be *Reſtored* to a ſounder *Conſtitution*, and better *Converſation*, by *publick Penance*, or the Church rid of them, (both as to Infection, and Scandal) by *Excommunication*.

Pſal. 106. 23.

1 *Theſſ.* 5. 14.

2. And thus much ſhall ſuffice, to be ſpoken of the *Duty* here enjoyned; and the *Perſons* who are to *perform* it; and what their *ſeveral Parts* are, wherein they muſt contribute to ſo good a Work: So that there now reſts only (on this Head) the *Manner* how they are each of them to diſcharge it, to be conſidered: and that is (*in the Spirit of Meekneſs.*) as follows in the *Text*, (*he that is overtaken in a fault, muſt be reſtored,* ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος) *in a meek manner, by thoſe that undertake the Cure.* For the Explication of which *Phraſe*, you muſt know, 1. *That.* Πραότης, the *Vertue* here recommended, and rendred, *Meekneſs*; is, (as *Moraliſts* define it,) a *Vertue, which Checks, and keeps within due Bounds of Moderation, the otherwiſe unruly Paſſions of Anger and Revenge*; *and renders thoſe Wild-beaſtlike Emotions of Mans Soul,* πραεῖς or *tame*; which is the proper Notion of the *Greek Word*.

2*ly.* That this *moral Vertue*, as it is improved by *divine Grace*, becomes a *Fruit of the Holy Spirit*, and is mentioned as ſuch, by our *Apoſtle* in the *Chap.* next preceeding this, *Gal.* 5. 23. v. 23. And hence, *Interpreters* ordinarily are apt to derive the

the reaſon of this annexing (*Spirit*) to (*Meekneſs*) in the *Text*; ſo, that the *Spirit of Meekneſs*, in this Notion, means only ſuch a *Meekneſs*, as is the *Fruit of the Spirit*.

But I think rather, the reaſon of joyning (*Spirit*) to (*Meekneſs*) here, is rather to be fetched from *parallel Phraſes*, in the *Old Teſtament*, and ſo is an *Hebraiſm*, as many other Forms of Speaking are, in the *New Teſtament*. Now the *Hebrews frequently* uſe, to expreſs any *vehement Impulſe*, or *ſtrong* and *frequent Propenſion* of the Mind, to ſuch or ſuch a thing, by the Name of the *Spirit* thereof. Thus (in *evil things*) is the *Spirit of Jealouſie*, uſed for a *ſtrong* and *vehement Jealouſie*, Num. 5. 14. *A Spirit of whoredomes*, for a *vehement Inclination* to *Whoredomes*. Hoſ. 4. 12. A *Spirit of deep ſleep*, for a *continual lethargical Propenſion*. Iſ. 29. 10. and (in *good things alſo*) a *Spirit of Underſtanding*, Job 20. 3. *and Judgment*, Iſ. 4. 4. and *Counſel, and the Fear of the Lord*, Iſ. 11. 3. (not excluding the *Original* of them, as deriving themſelves from the *Spirit* of *God*,) *connote*, the *powerful*, and *plentiful* Operations of them.

A *Spirit* of *Meekneſs*, then in the *Text*, (according to this Notion,) denotes a *ſtrong Inclination* to, and a large *Proportion* of *Meekneſs*, upon ſuch Occaſions, exerciſed towards *fallen Brethren*, for your *Reſtitution*, *poſſeſſing*, and ſtrongly *influencing* the *Spirits* of thoſe who go about ſo Charitable a Work; which by *paſſionate Applications*, would be *retarded*, as a *Wound* in the *Body*, by too *rigid Handling*, is oftentimes the longer e'er it be *Cured*.

3. That the *Meekneſs*, the *Spirit* whereof is here recommended, is not to be underſtood in a *ſtrict philoſophical Senſe*, as it is confined to the *Regulation* of the *Paſſions* of *Anger* and *Revenge* only; but in a *larger Notion*, as it lays Reſtraints alſo on thoſe of *Pride* and *Contempt of others*: And ſo it includes in its Compaſs, thoſe excellent *Qualities* that follow, that is, (*firſt*) of *Patience*, in undergoing the greateſt *Evils* from *God*, as owning that we deſerve *worſe*; and *thankfulneſs* for *the leaſt Mercies*, as judging our ſelves unworthy of them.

them; (2) *modeſt* Submiſſion to our *Superiours*, among *Men*; *obeying* their *Lawful*, and *candidly interpreting* their *dubious Commands*. (3 all obliging *Kindneſs*, and *reſpectful Civilities* to our *Equals*; rather *preferring them in Honour*, then contending with them for *Punctilio's* of that Nature, *Rom.* 12. 10. Eſpecially, if they be *good Men*: it much becoming the *meek Soul*, (*with* St. *Paul*) to look on himſelf, as *leſs then the leaſt of Saints*. Eph. 3. 8. and if they be *bad*, to *leſſen* their *Crimes*, in ballance with our *own*, and (by his Example) reflecting on our ſelves as *chief of Sinners*, 1 Tim. 1. 15. (4) *Kindly*, and *Mildly* and *Prudently* taking notice of their *Faults*; and *taking* it *kindly* from them, when they in like manner *take notice of ours*, and *reprove* us for them; (5) *not rejoycing*, though they be our *Enemies*; in any Ill they *do*, or *ſuffer*, 1 Cor. 13. 6, (6) not haſtily *quarelling* them for *little Injuries*, and being ready to *receive*, and give moderate *Satisfaction* for ſuch, on either ſide.

7. And *laſtly*, towards *Inferiours*, ſhewing our ſelves *Acceſſible*, and *Treatable* to the *Meaneſt* of them: and being ready, on juſt Occaſions, to do them all *Offices* of *Humanity*, or *Chriſtianity*; never oppreſſing them by our *Power* or *Purſe*; nor in any Caſe, *Tyrannically* uſing the *Advantages* we have over them, or with a contemptuous *Imperiouſneſs*, *provoking them to Wrath*, Eph. 6. 4. and *moderating Threatnings*, (and *Corrections*) by *what is Juſt and Equal*, v. 9. and *Col.* 4. 1. yea if *Children*, or even *Slaves* to us, (as moſt *Servants* were, when the *Apoſtle* gave theſe *Directions*, but now mentioned.)

And by theſe, and the like *Meaſures*, (in the Caſe of an *offending Brothers* Reſtitution) are all to ſhew this *Vertue*.

1. Even *Eccleſiaſtical Officers*, that have the ῥάβδος, *or rod*, are not to uſe it *always*, nor indeed, ever when *Lenity* will *prevail*; but rather, (as the *Apoſtle* intimates he deſired, 1 *Cor.* 4. 21.) to *reclaim Offenders* with *the ſpirit of Meekneſs*: and when their *Obſtinacy* calls for it, to lay on that *Rod* moſt ſeverely, and withal, to ſhew with how much *unwillingneſs* they are *forced* to it, and that their *fatherly Bowels* *Jer.* 31. 30.

els (as *Gods* towards *Ephraim*) are *troubled for them*; and *pronounce Sentence*, (as the *Apoſtle* doth againſt the irregular *walkers* among the *Philippians*, ch. 3. 18, 19.) when he declareth them *Enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*, and denounceth the *Deſtruction* from God impendent over them,) with *compaſſionate Tears*, or equivalent Indications of *Condolency*.

2. And with a *Spirit* much of the ſame Temper, ſhould all *other Chriſtians* carry themſelves, in the ſeveral Circumſtances, wherein their *Brethren's falls* come under their notice. If their *Crimes* be only *Private*, their *Admonitions* and *Reproofs* are to be ſo too; and thoſe managed with all *Modeſt*, *Kind*, and *diſcreet Deportment*, and *Language* proportionable; and *patiently reiterated* again, and again, with ſuch a *Long-ſuffering* as God uſes towards us, to *bring us to Repentance*, 2 Pet. 3. 9.

And if, at laſt, we are enforced by our Duty to make the *Crimes* more *known*, by calling in the *Aſſiſtance* of others; not to do it *Raſhly*, and in a *Paſſion*, but *Deliberately*, and with that *Gradation* which our *Saviour* commands us to obſerve, *Mat.* 18. 17. and when it comes in the Iſſue, to the *Cenſure* of the *Church*, and the Offenders are by juſt *Penance* expoſed to *publick Shame*, we are not to entertain them (in ſo doing before us, and the Congregation) with *Countenances*, and *Carriages*, importing *Lightneſs*, and *Frothineſs* of *Spirit*; much leſs, with *Jeers*, *Flouts*, or *Reproaches*, in *Word* or *Geſture*: but with a *Serious* and *compoſed Gravity* of *Spirit*; and *Demeanour* through the *whole Action*; ſuch as may ſpeak us *pitiful* and compaſſionate *Spectators* of ſo ſad a *Scene*, and withal *devout Aſſiſtants* of them, and the *Congregation*, in our conjoyned *Prayers* for them: and laſtly, when the *Action* is *over*, and they *Authoritatively Reſtored* to the *Peace of the Church*, and *Re-admitted* to the *Communion* of that holy Society; we ought to be ready to *Re-admit* them alſo into our *particular Affections*, and with all *brotherly Kindneſs* to *Embrace* them, to *give them the right Hand of Fellowſhip*, to we

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come them again into *Christs Fold*, from whence they *strayed*: and thence forward no more to remember their *former Failings*; and much less, to *Reproach* them with, and *cast* in their *Teeth* those Crimes, which they have by their *Penitence*, washed away. For such a Carriage, in such Cases, is both *Unmanly*, and *Unchristian*. *Unmanly*, as that which is *inconsistent* with *good Breeding*, in the Judgment of all *civil Societies*; and much more *Unchristian*, as that which directly breaks one of Christ's *great Commands* of *mutual Forgiveness*, Eph. 4. 32. *Col.* 3. 12, 13. and upon the *Non-performance* whereof, our very *Pardon* from God himself, is *Suspended*. *Matt.* 6. 14. Mark 11. 25, 26. Nay more, our very *Prayers* are denied *Access* to him for *Pardon* to our selves; we not being warranted to *ask* it, but on that Condition. *Matt.* 6. 12. And *lastly*, (such a *Command*, as does, not only enjoyn the *Duty* of *Forgiveness*, but also sets us the just *Measure* of Performance, even the *Example* of our *Heavenly Father*. and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, Eph. 4. 32. before quoted. Wherein we are enjoyned to *forgive, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*: And how that is, the Scripture in many *emphatical Forms* of Speech tells us: To wit, by *blotting out our Transgressions*, and *not remembring our Sins*. Is. 43. 25. *Forgiving our Iniquity, and remembring our sin no more*. Jer. 31. 34. *And casting all our sins into the depths of the sea*. Mic. 7. 19. *And behind his back*, (*so, as never to look on them any more*.) Is. 38. 17. Yea so, as (supposing they should be sought for) thenceforward, *never to be found*. Jer. 50. 20. *&c.*

So that, in effect, he that *Reproacheth* his *Brother* in this Case, does indeed *curse himself*, when he *prays* God *to forgive him, as he forgives*.

III. And thus I have dispatched the *main Thing*, I intended on this Occasion to Prosecute; to wit, (the *Duty* of *Restoring our fallen Brethren with the Spirit of Meekness*.) I have only remaining, to touch in a few Words, the *two Motives* which the *Apostle* here urgeth, to induce us to perform it in the manner Prescribed: after which, (with a few Words relating to the Occasion) I shall conclude. Which *Motives*, (as I told you before,) are *two*.

1. The *consideration* of our *selves*, as liable to the same *Temptations*, by which *others* are *overtaken*. And this, as we are *Men*, ought to prevail with us, to *consider* our *fallen Brethren*, as those betwixt whom and us, only the *Grace of God*, (not any *Prerogative*, or *peculiar Power*, or Vertue of our *own*) hath put a *Difference*.

1. Which *Motive* it concerns even the *most Spiritual*, such as are most eminently so, by *Office* in the *Church*; and though (as I before intimated) it ought not to induce them to lay aside the ῥάβδον, or *Rod* of Correction altogether, where the Case requires it; yet ought to prevail even with *them*, not to use it, where it may without *hazard* of *Souls*, and *Scandal* to the Church, be *forborn*: and when Necessity inforceth them to use it, to shew, as I told you before, by their *Managery* thereof, that their *Duty*, not their *Inclination* puts them upon it. For even they are obliged, (by the sad *Examples*, both in *Scripture*, and too common *Experience* set before them) to *consider themselves*, as *liable to be Tempted*, either with the *same*, or *other*, as *foul Crimes* as those are, which they are to *Censure*.

2. And the like use ought every *Christian* in the Church to make of this *Motive*, who either is, or thinks himself *more*
3.1.3. *Spiritual*, then *others*, whose Actions speak them (in the *Apostles Phrase*) more *Carnal*. For to every such Person, in a particular *Apostrophe*, my *Text* speaks, (*consider thy self, least thou also be tempted.*) *Noah*, and *Lot*, and *David*, and many other great *Saints* in Scripture, are for this end set before the best of us, as Examples *for our Admonition*; lest, when we *think our selves to stand* most secure, we be in like manner *endangered to fall*. 1 Cor. 10. 12.

3. And most of all are those concerned, to lay this *Motive* to Heart, who, when any of their Brethren are exposed to *Shame* as *Criminals*, are most apt to vent their *Spleen* towards them, in an unsavory *insulting* Way; and withal, to *flatter themselves in their own Eyes*, and *Vaunt* themselves before *others*, (though they be *Carnal* enough as to other *Fruits*

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of the Flesh) that they are not such *Sinners*, as those whom (with the *Publican*, Luke 18. 13.) they see *beating their Breasts*, and begging *Mercy* of God, and the Congregation to which yet, would they *consider themselves*, as our *Apostle* adviseth, might easily find, that though they are not open *Adulterers*, or *Fornicators*, yet possibly they are, *secretly such*, or (if not so, neither yet) *common Swearers*, or *Drunkards*, or profane *Scoffers* at *Religion*: or, (if they make a shew of something like *Piety* before the World, yet) possibly *cheating Traders*, *Exactors*, *Oppressors*, *Grinders of the Faces of the Poor*; *Hereticks*, or *schismatical Dividers of the Church*; and because of those *Vices*, deserve a *place* among those *Penitents*, whom they *Insult* over; and may one Day wish they had taken part of their *Penance* with them, rather than after, *being highly esteemed in the Eyes of Men*; to be eternally *an abomination to the Lord*, Luke 16. 15.

2. The *second Motive* here tendred to our Consideration, is, that by treating *offending Brethren*, in order to their Recovery with the *Spirit of Meekness*, (and so *bearing their Burdens*, by a compassionate Temper towards them,) we Act as *Christians*; and (*fulfil the Law of Christ*;) who hath herein placed a great part of that *Blessedness* which his Religion Conducts us to. *Matt.* 5. 5. Hath *commended* it to us by his *own Example*; and made this a part of that *easie Yoke*, which he lays on us, in order to our everlasting *Rest*, to *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. 11. 28, 29, 30. And indeed, there is nothing, wherein his *Life* was more eminently *Exemplary*, than in his *Meekness* towards *penitent Offenders*. And we may make a guess at his *Temper* toward such, by his frequent *Conversation*, (in order to the *Reclaiming* them,) with *Publicans* and *Sinners*, in opposition to the sowre Humor of the austere *Pharisees*, Matt. 9. 11, 12, 13. 11. 19. By his *Treatment* of the *Woman*, that Penitently *washed his feet with tears*, and *wiped them with the hairs of her head*, *&c.* Luke 7. 38, 39. *&c.* And *the other Woman* Accused of *Adultery*, John 8. 10, 11. *&c.* Who, though

there be no peculiar Acts of her *Penitence* expressed; yet, it must be supposed, that our *Saviour* saw that in her, which rendred her malleable to receive the *Impressions* of that *meek Dismission* from him, with Assurance of his Pardon, provided *she Sinned no more*; i. e. left her Lewd Course of Life every way, and particularly preserved her *Chastity* Inviolate for the future.

If then, there be so much of the *Spirit* of *Christianity* in this *Spirit* of *Meekness*, which the *Apostle* here recommends to us: the *contrary Temper* must necessarily, be *Unchristian*, as well as *Inhumane*.

And thus have I at length, dispatched the *words*, as they relate to the *Duty* of those who are *not Criminal*, toward such as *are* so: to wit, the *Restoring* them *with the Spirit of Meekness*. But I must not, in the close of this Discourse, omit to touch somewhat on the *Duty* of *Criminals* themselves towards those who *endeavour* to *restore* them. For the *Duty* of the *one sort*, will rationally follow from that of the other; both as to the *thing* it self to be done, and the *manner* of doing it.

1. As to the *thing to be done*, if the *spiritual Brethren* be obliged to *restore* the *fallen Ones*, it is most highly reasonable, that they themselves should not be *unwilling*, but rather readily *comply* with their Endeavours, in order to their *own Restitution*. For indeed, *Self-love*, is the *measure* by which all *Love* to our *Neighbours* is to be regulated.

And proportionably, here, *Love* to *himself* in the *wounded Patient*, (in reason,) ought to Operate more strongly on him to *desire* to be *Cured*; than *Kindness*, or *Compassion*, can Operate upon the *Chyrurgeon*, to be at the *Pains*, or *Charge* to *Cure* him. And therefore, when any ones *Conscience Smites* him for the most *secret Sins*, and he cannot by his own Endeavours betwixt God and his own *Soul*, recover his *inward Peace*; it is certainly, his Duty, of himself, to *open* his *wound* to some skilful *spiritual Chirurgeon*, and commit himself Voluntarily to his *Conduct* for his *Cure*; and especially, and before all other, to his own *Pastor*, who is *over him in the Lord*, 1 Thes. 5. 12, 14.

And

And if Men's *Sins* be *known* to *others*; they are not to think *themselves Affronted*, if they be *reproved* by any of them; much less, must they *quarrel* them, for not being willing to *suffer Sin upon them*; but rather take it as *a Kindness*, that the *righteous smites them*, Psal. 141. 5.

And *lastly*, if the Sin be *Publickly*, and *scandalously Notorious*; they should be ready to use all lawful *Means*, yea, rather, seek out after *the* most *proper Expedients*, in order to the giving as *publick Satisfaction* to the *offended Congregation*; and much more, are they obliged to comply with the *lawful Discipline* of the *Church*, and submit to the *Methods*, which in this Case are appointed for their *Restitution*.

For otherwise, they will incur the desperate *Hazard* of *hardening their Hearts*, and *Necks* in *Sin* and endanger themselves to be *judicially hardned* by God, till they be *Destroyed without Remedy*; according to the dreadful Threatnings, levelled against such *Obstinacy* in Scripture, especially, *Psal.* 95. 8. *Heb.* 3. 15. and *Psal.* 81. 12. *Prov.* 28. 14, 29. 1 *John* 12. 40. *Rom.* 2. 5. *&c.*

2. And as to the *manner* of doing it; there is *as much Reason*, why the *Spirit of Meekness* should shew it self in the *fallen Brethren* as in those, who undertake to *Restore them*. Yea, indeed, much more; because (as in the *Body*, so in the *Soul*,) any *disorderly* Passion, is apt to *Inflame* a *Wound*, and render the *Cure* more *Tedious*, and *Hazardous*.

Besides, in their Case, they have no appearance of *Reason*, to justifie them in the *Passions* of *Anger*, or *Revenge*. For who can think it Rational, to be *angry* with another, for such *Offices*, as really, and in due Estimation, carry in them the greatest, and most obliging *Kindnesses*; and such are indeed, all *pious* and *charitable Attempts*, to *Rescue* a Man from *Sin*, and *Hell* the greatest Evils. yea, though the *Attempter*, (through *Haste*, and *inconsiderate Zeal*, should be undecently *rough*, and forget his wonted *Meekness*; yet his *Love*, in such a Case, in all reason, should excuse his *Rudeness*. And afterwards, to *reflect* on this, as deserving a *Revenge*; is certainly, as unreasonable

reasonable, as it is to return *Evil* for *Good*, which *David* complains of, as a most unaccountable Malice, *Psal.* 109. 4, 5. And as little colour of *Reason* can such Persons have for *Pride*, which another way is wont to dislodge *Meekness*. For there is nothing more unreasonable, then for a *deformed Person*, to be lifted up with Opinion of his own *Beauty*; and all Sin is a *Deformity* to the *Soul*. For him, then, that is notoriously *Criminal*, to be *Proud*, and *Impatient* to be looked on, and treated as he deserves; is so very unbecoming, that it ordinarily gives the greatest Tentation to others, to break the *Measures* of *Meekness* towards him, and turns their *Pity* and *Compassion* into *Scorn* and *Contempt*, in the *highest Degree*.

And this is the *Duty*, I am, (in the last place,) to press upon you, that now appear as *Penitents*, in this *Congregation*. It is certainly, to be commended in you, that you have been *willing* to *accept of the Punishment*, the *Church in Christ's Name*, hath inflicted on you for your *Iniquity*. And I hope, it proceeds from an *hearty desire* to be *restored* to your *Integrity*, by *Repentance*; and that the *Confessions* you are to make before God and his Church, will be accompanied with a *deep sense of true Sorrow*, and *brokenness of Heart*, which may render it *as acceptable a sacrifice to God*, as *David*'s was, *Psal.* 51. 17. and that none of you will play the *Hypocrites* with God, and his Church, in professing that *outwardly*, which *inwardly* you do not feel. And indeed, according to your *Sincerity* herein, you are to expect *God's Pardon*; and according to the *Evidence* you give thereof, by your *meek* and *humble Demeanour*, (joyned with the other *circumstantial Evidences* of *true Sorrow*, which naturally attend it where it is so) you will be entitled to the *Churches* also. And I must tell you, the *Church* will have the more reason to be satisfied herein, by your *meek Submission* to those *Habits*, and *Rites* of *Penitence*, which she, in Conformity to the ancient Times, enjoyns you, of all which, (and they were very many) our *Church*, (because many of the rest were abused by the *Popish* Church, when they thought fit to make *Penance* a *Sacrament*,) has thought fit generally to retain but

Lev. 26. 41.

two:

two: that of the *white Sheet*, and *Wand*, withwhich her *Penitence* are enjoyned (if the *Crimes* require it,) to appear, and where they do not, she hath liberty, even to dispense with them.

That of the *Sheet*, is only *enjoyned* to you——; all the rest being admitted, only in their *Course-working-day apparrel*, with the ῥάβδος, or *Wand*, to acknowledge they justly deserved the Rod of *Discipline*, should be used towards them. And the *reason* of that *Difference*, is; (as I suppose) because your *Offence* appearing to your *Ecclesiastical Judges*, accompanied with many gross and foul Circumstances of *wanton Dalliance*, betwixt the *Wife* of *another Man*, and *you*, also, a *married Person*, gave a *scandalous Appearance*, and *notorious* cause of *Suspicion* of *actual Adultery*; from which Suspicion the *Defences* you made, did not, (in their Judgment) sufficiently *clear* you; as you *Confession* enjoyns you to acknowledge: whereas, the *Crime* of the rest, was of an *inferiour Guilt*, though very *great* too, according to the *Apostles* Aggravation of it, (1 *Cor.* 6. 13. &c.) and they humbly *offered* themselves to their *Penance*, before the *Court* had *passed Judgment* upon them, in order thereunto.

But, if they had required you *all*, to have *appeared* in the like *linnen Garb*; I know no reason, why *any* of you should have *waved* it, on that Account. A *course square Sheet*, without being *Fashioned*, or *Trimmed*, being much of *Kin* to the *Sack-cloath*, which antiently *Penitents*, (whom God himself in a particular Case, required to present themselves before him, *without Ornaments*, Exod. 33. 4, 5, 6.) appeared in, as many *Scriptures* witness: only, with this difference, that the *old Sack-cloath* was far *rougher*, and more *pungent*, as being made of *Hair*, not *Flax*, or *Hemp*, as ours is. This Imitation however, the Church thought fit to retain, rather than to leave *Penitents*, the choice of *coloured*, and *fashionable Garments*, least even *Penance* it self, should in time turn to an *Ostentation* of *Pride* in *Apparel*, through the affected *Emulation* of Persons, vainly inclined to *Singularity* in the *Garb* they Publickly *appear* in.

And for the *whiteness* in particular, of the Vest, I am apt to believe, it might owe it self, to the Conformity, which the

Design

Design of *publick Penitence*, bears to that of *Baptism*. This being (as the *Evangelists* call it) the *Baptism of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins*, Mark 1. 4. *Luke* 3. 3. and *that*, a Profession of *Repentance*, in order to the same end, the *restoring* Penitents who had notoriously broken their *Baptismal* Vow, to their *Baptismal Estate*, and Capacity again: it is not to me improbable that the *Candidates* for *both* were enjoyned to appear in the *same Garb*, wherein the *one* sort (by the Testimony of all Antiquity) were admitted to that *Ordinance*: from which Practise, the *Dominica in Albis*, which from the *white Vestments* worn by the Baptised, on that solemn Day especially appointed Anciently for the publick *Administration* thereof, still retains with us, the Name of *White-Sunday*.

This *Digression* (if it be so to be accounted) on this Occasion, I thought fit to make, in order, if not to the Satisfaction, yet to the stopping the mouth of those, who, (that they may discourage the *Practice* of *publick Penance*, so useful for the Souls of *Penitents* themselves, and so conducible to the *Credit* of *Christianity*,) have, in this last Age, endeavoured to *Ridicule* it; and I hope, it may not prove altogether unsuccessful to the end intended.

And now, (to conclude my *Application* to you;) remember what I told you, that the *sincere Conformity* in your *Hearts*, to your *outward Garb*, in the *Confessions* you are now to make according to your several Cases, can only render you capable of the benefit of that *Absolution*, or *Ministerial Forgiveness* which in the close of this *Action*, I am impowered by the Church to give you, (as the *Apostle* expresseth it, 2 Cor. 2. 10.) in the *Person of Christ*: for without it, it will be bestowed only, *clave errnate*, (as the *Schools* speak) upon *mistaken Subjects*, and so prove not only *Ineffectual*, for you good, but also greatly *Prejudicial* to you, before him that *searcheth the Heart* and *tryeth the Reins*, by the Addition of high *Presumption*, and foul *Hypocrisie* to your *other Crimes*; which God of his Mercy give you Grace to prevent. *Amen.*

FINIS.